



Aruba's ONLY English newspaper

## Ready, set, travel: The holiday rush to the airports and highways is underway

By DAVID KOENIG  
AP Airlines Writer

It's beginning to look a lot like a hectic holiday travel season, but it might go relatively smoothly if the weather cooperates. Travel over Christmas and New Year's tends to spread out over many days, so the peaks in the U.S. are likely to be lower than they were during the Thanksgiving holiday. That is making airlines and federal officials optimistic. But the debacle at Southwest Airlines over Christmas last year should guard against overconfidence. Just this week, the Transportation Department announced a settlement in which Southwest will pay \$140 million for that meltdown, which stranded more than 2 million travelers. So far this year, airlines have canceled 1.2% of U.S. flights, down nearly half from 2.1% over the same period last year. Cancellations were well below 1% during Thanksgiving, according to FlightAware. "I don't want to jinx us, but so far 2023 has seen the lowest cancellation rate in the last five years," Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said Tuesday.



Continued on Page 2 The sun sets behind the Manhattan skyline as plane approaches LaGuardia Airport on Sept. 6, 2023, in New York. Associated Press

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# Ready, set, travel: The holiday rush to the airports and highways is underway

Continued from Front

He added, however, that winter weather "will certainly be a challenge in the next few weeks."

Canceled flights surged last year, as airlines were caught short-staffed when travel rebounded from the pandemic more quickly than expected. Since then, U.S. airlines have hired thousands of pilots, flight

attendants and other workers, and the cancellation rate has come down.

After struggling with cancellations and other disruptions last year, European travel has also been smoother this year and more people are expected travel over Christmas and New Year's, said Mike Arnot, spokesman for Cirium, an aviation analytics company. Still, about 3%

of flights within Europe have been canceled in so far in December, and nearly 30% have been delayed, according to Cirium.

Cirium projected that the number of seats flown within Europe will rise 10% between Dec. 22 and Jan. 2 compared to the similar period in 2023. High winds from a storm named Pia disrupted travel Thursday in the Netherlands,



Motor vehicles move along Interstate 276 in Feasterville, Pa., Thursday, Dec. 21, 2023.

Associated Press

EAGLE ARUBA RESORT

## Christmas

MENU

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◇ BUFFET ◇

- Coconut Shrimps. Served with piña colada dipping sauce.
- Venezuelan Chicken Salad
- Brazilian Christmas Rice: mixed with raisins, onions, cashew nuts, walnuts, dried fruits, dried tomatoes & mushrooms
- Truffel Mashed Potato.
- Beef wellington with mushroom and chestnuts parmesan crust

**CARVING STATION**

- Honey glazed ham served with pear and saffron chutney.
- Roasted Turkey.

**SAUCES**

- Cranberry sauce, strawberry sauce, gravy

**DESSERTS**

- Bolo di glas (in pudding or gelatine pudding)
- Carlota de limon (lime icebox cake)

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**DATE:** December 24th

**TIME:** 6pm - 11pm

**VENUE:** Ballroom

**MUSIC:** Live Background Music

**PRICE:** \$45 Adult

\$17.50 Kids

Under 4 year free

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Denmark and northern areas of the U.K.

More than a quarter of flights arriving and departing Amsterdam Airport Schiphol were canceled Thursday, and hundreds of flights were delayed, according to Flightaware. Copenhagen Airport in Denmark warned that weather conditions posed a "risk of delays and cancellations," especially on Thursday night. In the U.K., train service was suspended or slowed, and ferries stopped running to islands off Scotland's west coast. British Airways grounded two dozen flights, British broadcaster Sky News reported. A spokesperson for the airline did not provide further details but apologized to customers for having to "make some adjustments" to its schedule. Adding to difficulties, workers at the undersea tunnel between Britain and France held a surprise strike on Thursday, disrupting train trips for thousands of travelers getting away ahead of Christmas. Eurostar, which operates passenger train services from London to continental Europe, said it "had to cancel most services scheduled to run" on Thursday. Eurotunnel Le Shuttle, which runs vehicle-carrying trains on the same link underneath the English Channel, tweeted that service has been suspended.

Globally, air travel has still not fully recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic. About 8.6 billion people are projected to travel through the world's airports in 2023, according to Airports Council International, a Montreal-based trade group for airports. That's about 94% of the passenger

volume in 2019, before the pandemic hit.

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration says it is creating more air-traffic routes, especially along the East Coast, to help keep planes moving over the holidays.

Over the past year, airlines have blamed many of their delays on a shortage of FAA air traffic controllers that slows down traffic. The agency, which pressured airlines to reduce flights in the New York City area this summer and fall because of FAA understaffing, says it has been hiring and now has 10,700 certified controllers.

AAA is forecasting that 115 million people will go 50 miles or more from home between Saturday and New Year's Day. That is a 2% increase over the auto club's forecast last year, although it would fall short of the record set in 2019.

Most of those people will drive, and they will save a bit on gasoline, compared with last Christmas. The nationwide average Wednesday was \$3.08 a gallon, down 23 cents from a month ago and 6 cents from this time last year, according to AAA.

The busiest days on the road will be Saturday and next Thursday, Dec. 28, according to transportation data provider INRIX.

The Transportation Security Administration expects that the busiest days for air travel will be Thursday, Friday and New Year's Day. TSA expects to screen more than 2.5 million travelers each of those days — that's still far short of the record 2.9 million that agents screened on the Sunday after Thanksgiving. □

# Top U.S. officials to visit Mexico for border talks as immigration negotiations with Congress continue

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and MARK STEVENSON  
Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)**— A delegation of top U.S. officials is expected to visit Mexico soon as negotiations over how to enforce immigration rules at the two countries' shared border continue on Capitol Hill.

Republican and Democratic lawmakers are debating border policy changes as part of a larger conversation over U.S. assistance for Ukraine and Israel, which are top foreign policy priorities for the White House.

The upcoming visit to Mexico comes amid controversy over the closure of two rail crossings in Texas earlier this week. U.S. officials said the personnel needed to be redeployed to handle high numbers of migrants illegally crossing the border. Mexican businesses warn that the closings are hampering trade.

President Joe Biden spoke with Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador on Thursday and agreed that additional border enforcement was needed so the crossings can be reopened, according to White House national security spokesman John Kirby.

Kirby said Biden asked Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Homeland Security Sec-



White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre listens as National Security Council spokesman John Kirby speaks during a press briefing at the White House, Thursday, Dec. 21, 2023, in Washington. Associated Press

retary Alejandro Mayorkas and White House homeland security adviser Liz Sherwood-Randall to travel to Mexico in the coming days to meet with López Obrador and his team to discuss further actions that can be taken to address the challenge.

A U.S. official, who requested anonymity to discuss planning, said the trip would likely take place on Saturday if finalized.

"Their visit will really be about getting at the migratory flows and talking to President López Obrador

and his team about what more we can do together," Kirby said at a White House briefing.

Mexican companies are so eager for the border crossings to reopen that the leader of the Industrial Chamber of Commerce wrote on his social media accounts late Wednesday that a deal had been brokered to get them reopened. A U.S. Embassy spokesman quickly denied that, saying they remained closed.

The Mexican Employers' Association described the

closure of rail crossings into Eagle Pass and El Paso, Texas, as a "failure of migration policy." The organization said the situation was causing losses of \$100 million per day in delayed shipments. Mexico receives much of the corn and soy products it needs to feed livestock by rail from the United States. Auto parts and automobiles also frequently are shipped by rail in Mexico. "We energetically but respectfully call on the governments of Mexico and the United States to address the migration crisis

which is affecting the flow of goods, given that this measure only damages the economies of both nations," the association wrote in a statement.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection said Sunday the decision was made "in order to redirect personnel to assist the U.S. Border Patrol with taking migrants into custody."

But it also appeared the U.S. government wants Mexico to crack down on migrants riding railcars to the U.S. border.

In the Sunday statement, the CBP wrote that "after observing a recent resurgence of smuggling organizations moving migrants through Mexico via freight trains, CBP is taking additional actions to surge personnel and address this concerning development, including in partnership with Mexican authorities." Migrants often ride freight trains through Mexico, hopping off just before entering the U.S.

Elsewhere, the Lukeville, Arizona, border crossing is closed, as is a pedestrian entry in San Diego, so that more officials can be assigned to the migrant influx. Illegal crossings at the U.S. southwestern border topped 10,000 some days in December, an abnormally high level. □

# Harris to kick off 2024 with stops in Nevada, South Carolina, home to some of Democrats' first votes

By MEG KINNARD  
Associated Press

**COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP)**— Vice President Kamala Harris is visiting Nevada and South Carolina next month, two of the earliest states on the Democratic presidential calendar, where she'll court voters she and President Joe Biden hope to win over. Harris will meet with members of the powerful casino workers' Culinary Union in Las Vegas on Jan. 3, which offers one of the most powerful

endorsements in Nevada Democratic politics, the White House said Thursday. Three days later, she plans to head to Myrtle Beach in South Carolina, home of the Democrats' leadoff primary, to address an annual women's retreat of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the oldest historically Black denomination in the U.S. Harris has been touring the country to tout the administration's accomplishments, most recently

angling to energize younger voters during a multi-stop college tour. Next month she plans to embark on a nationwide series of events to rally voters to give Biden a second term and regain full control of Congress. Both South Carolina and Nevada are critical early-voting states for Biden and Harris as they seek reelection next year. The visit will be Harris' seventh as vice president to South Carolina, where Black voters play a critical role in



Vice President Kamala Harris speaks to supporters after filing President Joe Biden's paperwork to appear on South Carolina's 2024 Democratic presidential primary on Nov. 10, 2023, in Columbia, S.C.

Associated Press

Democratic politics — one of the reasons for the White House-led schedule over-

haul that placed the state's primary first on the 2024 voting calendar on Feb. 3. □

# Methamphetamine, fentanyl drive record homeless deaths in Portland, Oregon, annual report finds

By **CLAIRE RUSH**  
Associated Press

**PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)** — Fentanyl and methamphetamine drove a record number of homeless deaths last year in Oregon's Multnomah County, home to Portland, according to an annual report released by regional officials Wednesday.

At least 315 homeless people died in 2022 in the Portland area, the report found. Nearly 40% of fatalities — 123 — were from drug overdoses. Methamphetamine contributed to 81% of overdose deaths, and fentanyl contributed to 74%.

Kaia Sand, executive director of Street Roots, a social justice nonprofit that also publishes a newspaper, has worked on the annual report for years. In the report, she wrote that this year's edition "demonstrates the devastating impact of fentanyl."

"The first year I worked on this report — 2016 — fentanyl was not associated with any deaths," she wrote. "In 2020, four deaths were tracked to fentanyl, and by 2021, that number rose to 36 deaths. This year, the number skyrocketed to



Tents line the sidewalk on SW Clay St in Portland, Ore., Dec. 9, 2020.

Associated Press

91 deaths."

The figures underlie the increased risk of death facing people who live outside, and it comes as homelessness in the U.S. this year jumped a dramatic 12% to its highest reported level.

The mortality risk for people experiencing homelessness compared with the general county population was nearly six times higher for all causes of death, the report

found. For drug overdoses and homicide, it was 37 times higher and 32 times higher, respectively.

Homeless people, many of whom live near roadways, were also nearly 45 times more likely to die from a transportation-related injury than the general county population, according to the report. Fourteen people died of such a cause last year.

Among them was Angela

Boyd, who was the victim of a hit-and-run in southeast Portland. Her brother, Jake Ausmes, attended Wednesday's news conference unveiling the report to pay her homage.

"It's awful," he said, adding that he hopes new developments in the case will help it get "as much exposure as possible." He said his family intends to offer a \$2,500 reward to find the person responsible.

Violence also contributed homeless deaths — about a quarter of all people who died by homicide in Portland in 2022 were homeless, according to the report.

Twenty-five homeless people died by homicide in 2022, accounting for 8% of homeless fatalities. The majority were caused by firearms, the report said.

Additionally, the number of suicides — 17 — more than doubled from 2021.

For the first time, this year's report included hospital deaths in addition to data from the county medical examiner. That contributed, in part, to the sizable 63% increase in homeless deaths compared with 2021, when at least 193 homeless people died.

But county officials said that homeless deaths would have still broken a new record this year even based solely on county medical examiner figures. The report cites 249 homeless deaths recorded by the medical examiner in 2022 and 66 deaths recorded by hospitals.

More than 5,000 people were experiencing homelessness in the county in 2022, according to that year's federal data. □



The 6ABC helicopter known as Chopper 6 flies over Philadelphia's Penn Landing on Thursday, Sept. 7, 2023.

Associated Press

By **WAYNE PARRY**  
Associated Press

The Philadelphia television news crew members who died after their helicopter crashed in a southern New Jersey forest were returning

from a trip to film a Christmas lights display, an investigator said Thursday.

Todd Gunther, an investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board, told reporters near the crash site

## Philadelphia news helicopter crew filmed Christmas lights in New Jersey before fatal crash

that WPVI's Chopper 6 took off from Northeast Philadelphia Airport Tuesday night and "had flown over to report on some Christmas light activity, and then they were returning back to base when the accident occurred."

Killed in the crash were the pilot, 67-year-old Monroe Smith of Glenside, Pennsylvania, and a photographer, 45-year-old Christopher Dougherty of Oreland, Pennsylvania.

Gunther did not specify the precise location the crew was filming, but the station previously reported the

crew had been sent to a story assignment in Galloway Township, just outside Atlantic City.

One of the main attractions in Galloway is Historic Smithville, a tourist attraction that in winter includes a lavish holiday light display with over 120 Christmas trees decorated with more than 50,000 lights on a lake. The federal agency, which investigates fatal accidents involving transportation, has an eight-member team on-site in Washington Township in Burlington County, at Wharton State Forest. They plan to remain there for

three days and then issue a preliminary report 10 to 15 days after that time.

Gunther said investigators will look at anything that may have either contributed to or caused the crash, which occurred on a clear, cold night.

The chopper made two previous flights on Tuesday before the crash, he said.

Elements to be examined include the structural integrity of the helicopter, its rotor, drive and flight control systems, its maintenance history and "the physiology of the pilot on board," Gunther said. □

## A lone gunman opens fire in a Prague university, killing 15 people and injuring 24

By KAREL JANICEK

Associated Press

**PRAGUE (AP)** — A lone gunman opened fire Thursday in a university building in downtown Prague, killing at least 15 people and injuring more than 20 in the Czech Republic's worst mass shooting, police and the city's rescue service said.

The bloodshed took place in the philosophy department building of Charles University, where the shooter was a student, Prague Police Chief Martin Vondrasek said. The gunman also died, authorities said. His name has not been released.

Vondrasek said 24 were injured, and authorities warned that the death toll could rise.

Police gave no details about the victims or a possible motive for the shooting at the building located near the Vltava River in Jan Palach Square. Czech Interior Minister Vit Rakusan said investigators do not suspect a link to any extremist ideology or groups.

Vondrasek said police believe the gunman killed his father in his hometown of Hostoun, just west of Prague, earlier in the day, and that he had also been



A police officer walks across a bridge over the Vltava river in downtown Prague, Czech Republic, Thursday, Dec. 21, 2023.

planning to kill himself. He didn't elaborate.

The chief described the shooter as an excellent student with no criminal record, but didn't provide any other information.

The gunman suffered "devastating injuries" but it wasn't clear if he killed himself or was shot to death in an exchange of gunfire with officers, Vondrasek said, adding that there was "nothing to suggest that he had an accomplice."

The shooter legally owned

several guns, and what he did was "well thought out, a horrible act," Vondrasek said.

"We mourn the loss of life of members of our university community, express our deepest condolences to all the bereaved and our thoughts are with all those affected by the tragedy," Charles University said in a statement.

University authorities said they would tighten security in university buildings with immediate effect.

The building where the shooting took place is near the Vltava River in Jan Palach Square, a busy tourist area in Prague's Old Town. It is just a few minutes' walk from the picturesque Old Town Square, a major tourist attraction where a popular Christmas market attracts thousands of visitors.

The government quickly sought to quell concerns that the massacre was back by foreign interests.

"There's no indication that

it has anything to do with international terrorism," Rakusan said.

"It's a horrible crime, something the Czech Republic has never experienced," he said.

Pavel Nedoma, the director of the nearby Rudolfinum Gallery, said he watched from a window as a person standing on a balcony of the building fired a gun.

Authorities evacuated everyone from the building and police said they were still searching the area, including the balcony, for explosives.

The building forms part of the square and faces a bridge across the river with a view of Prague Castle, the seat of the Czech presidency. President Petr Pavel said he was "shocked" by what happened and offered his condolences to the relatives of the victims, as did leaders of Germany, France and Slovakia, the European Union and Israel. Where tourists, students and others would normally be enjoying the view of the iconic monument, chaos and terror instead took hold. Police vehicles and ambulances sped across the bridge with their sirens wailing. Officers sealed off the empty square. □

Associated Press

## China has started erecting temporary housing units after an earthquake destroyed 14,000 homes

**BEIJING (AP)** — Hundreds of temporary one-room housing units were being set up Thursday in northwest China for survivors of an earthquake that destroyed more than 14,000 homes and killed at least 135 people, according to state media reports.

Twelve people remained missing in an area hit by mudslides that inundated two villages, the reports said. Search teams were using excavators to dig out a thick sea of mud that covered roads and encased and blocked entry to buildings.

State broadcaster CCTV showed footage of cranes lifting white, box-like housing units and lining them up in an open field in Meipo, a village in Gansu province. About 260 had been erected, and the total in the village was expected to reach 500 across nine sites by Friday morning.

The arrival of the prefabricated units was a sign that many of the more than 87,000 people resettled after the Monday night earthquake may be homeless for some time. Many have been enduring temperatures well below freezing in flimsier tent-like units with blue plastic sheeting on the outside and a quilted cotton lining inside.

An assessment of the houses in a village visited by The AP on Wednesday found that 90% weren't safe to live in, experts told CCTV in an online report. Some of the homes in Yangwa village appear OK, but they have structural damage that make them unsafe, the experts said. For those that can be repaired, the work may have to wait until next year, because the soil is frozen. □



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, movable plank houses for earthquake victims are set up in Meipo Village, Jishishan County in northwest China's Gansu Province, Thursday, Dec. 21, 2023.

Associated Press

## U.N. says up to 300,000 Sudanese fled their homes after a notorious group seized their safe haven

By **SAMY MAGDY**  
Associated Press

**CAIRO (AP)** — Fighting between Sudan's military and a notorious paramilitary group forced up to 300,000 people to flee their homes in a province that had been a safe haven for families displaced by the devastating conflict in the northeastern African country, the U.N. said Thursday. The fighting erupted in the city of Wad Medani, the provincial capital of Jazeera province, after the Rapid Support Forces attacked the city earlier this month. The RSF said that it took over Wad Medani earlier this week, and the military said that its troops withdrew from the city, and an investigation was opened.

Sudan's war began in mid-April after months of tensions between military chief Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan and RSF commander Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagaló. Both generals led a military coup in October 2021 that derailed Sudan's short-lived transition to democracy following a popular uprising that forced the removal of President Omar al-Bashir in April 2019. The U.N. agency Interna-



Sudanese refugees gather outside a field hospital in Acre, Chad, Aug. 15, 2023.

Associated Press

tional Organization for Migration said that between 250,000 and 300,000 people fled the province many reportedly on foot to safer areas in the provinces of al-Qadarif, Sinnar and the White Nile. Some sheltered in camps for displaced people and many sought shelter in local communities, it said.

Jazeera, Sudan's breadbasket, was home to about

6 million Sudanese. Since the war, about 500,000 displaced fled to the province, mostly from the capital, Khartoum, which has been the center of fighting, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Medani, which is about 100 kilometers (60 miles) southeast of Khartoum, had hosted more than 86,000 of the displaced, OCHA said.

The World Food Program announced Wednesday that it has temporarily halted food assistance in some parts of Jazeera, in what it described a "major setback" to humanitarian efforts in the province.

The U.N. food agency said that it had provided assistance to 800,000 people in the province, including many families that fled the fighting in Khartoum.

The conflict in Sudan has wrecked the country and killed up to 9,000 people as of October, according to the United Nations. However, activists and doctors' groups say the real toll is far higher.

Catherine Russel, executive director of the U.N. children's agency, UNICEF, warned Thursday that the escalation could leave "children and families trapped between fighting lines or caught in the crossfire, with fatal consequences."

She said that families had already experienced "harrowing journeys" to reach safety early in the war. "Now, even that fragile sense of security is shattered as those same children have once again been forced from their homes," she added.

More than 7 million people were forced out of their homes, including more than 1.5 million who have sought refuge in neighboring countries, according to the U.N. figures. Chad received more than 500,000 refugees, mostly from Sudan's western region of Darfur, where the RSF conquered much of its areas. □

## Angola is leaving OPEC oil cartel after 16 years after dispute over production cuts

**LONDON (AP)** — Angola announced Thursday that it's leaving the OPEC oil producers cartel, coming after it battled with the group over lower production quotas this year.

Diamantino de Azevedo, the African nation's oil minister, said Angola "does not gain anything by remaining in the organization," according to state news agency Angop. The country joined OPEC in 2007.

Disagreements over lower oil quotas for some African countries, including Angola, led to an usual dayslong delay to OPEC's November meeting, where the group,



The logo of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is seen outside of OPEC's headquarters in Vienna, Austria, on March 3, 2022.

Associated Press

along with allied producers led by Russia, decide how much oil to send to the world.

At the meeting, Angola's production level was dropped to 1.11 million barrels per month after an assessment by the three independent sources, the organization said.

OPEC, led by Saudi Arabia, has been trying to bolster oil prices that have fallen in recent months over concerns about too much crude circulating in a weakening global economy, which could weigh on the thirst for oil for travel and industry. The lower prices have been

a good thing for U.S. drivers, who have been able to fill their gas tanks for less money in recent months but have hurt the bottom line of OPEC oil producers. The price of U.S. benchmark crude has fallen 8% this year.

Oil prices have gotten a boost in recent days as Yemen's Houthi rebels have escalated attacks on ships in the Red Sea and companies have diverted vessels from traveling through the area, where huge amounts of the world's energy supplies transit between the Middle East, Asia and Europe. □

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## Experience Unrivaled Excitement and Win Big at LIV Casino, Barceló Aruba

Oranjestad – Get ready to indulge in thrilling gaming experiences and a chance to strike it rich at LIV Casino, nestled within the luxurious Barceló Aruba resort. With a wide array of games and a captivating atmosphere, LIV Casino promises an unforgettable entertainment journey for visitors seeking excitement and good fortune.

LIV Casino boasts an impressive selection of 123 slot machines, each waiting to make someone a lucky winner. Among these, 114 are Dollar machines and 9 are Florin machines cater to various preferences and betting levels, offering a diverse



gaming experience that suits every player's style.

The casino is not just about slots – for those who relish the thrill of traditional table games, LIV Casino delivers on every front. Step up to the challenge at the Blackjack Table, where strategy meets chance, or take a spin at the Roulette Table for an electrifying game of luck. Additionally, the Three Card Poker Table offers a unique blend of strategy and excitement, adding a new dimension to the gaming floor.

Adding to the anticipation, every table at LIV Casino features its own progressive jackpot, promising the potential for monumental winnings that could change a player's life in an instant.

The gaming action at LIV Casino comes alive from 11 AM to 3 AM, ensuring non-stop excitement throughout the day and into the night. For those looking to experience the thrill of table games, the tables are open from 4:30 PM until closing, inviting players to try their hand at a variety of games while enjoying



the vibrant casino ambiance.

"Try your luck with us at LIV Casino at Barceló Aruba," encourages Marc Charley, Casino General Manager of LIV Casino. "We have crafted an environment where guests can immerse themselves in the thrill of gaming and experience the rush of winning big. Whether you're a seasoned player or a beginner, our diverse selection of games caters to all preferences."

LIV Casino at Barceló Aruba stands as a hub of entertainment, where visitors can not only try their luck but also revel in the world-class amenities

and hospitality that the Barceló brand is renowned for.

### About LIV Casino, Barceló Aruba:

LIV Casino, located within the lavish Barceló Aruba resort, offers a premier gaming experience on the stunning island of Aruba. With a wide range of slot machines and table games, as well as the allure of progressive jackpots, LIV Casino provides endless entertainment for both novice and seasoned players. The casino operates from 11 AM to 3 AM, while table games are available from 4:30 PM till closing. □

## Aruba Tourism Authority honors loyal visitors at Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort!

The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure of recognizing Distinguished Visitors of Aruba. These Distinguished

Visitors were respectively honored with certificate acknowledging their years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba.



The honor certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three honoring levels are as follows:

- Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
- Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
- Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively

visiting Aruba)

### The honorees were:

Distinguished Visitors of Aruba Mr. Richard & Mrs. Cindy Smilowitz from New Jersey, United States

Ms. Marouska Heyliger representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and staff members of the Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort bestowed the Distinguished Visitor certificate to the honorees, presented them with gifts, and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their best-loved vacation destination, as their home away

from home.

Top reasons for returning to Aruba, provided by the honorees were:

- "The Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort"
- Aruba's great weather
- Aruba's friendly people
- Aruba's great restaurants
- Aruba's safety

On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the honorees for their continued visits to the "One Happy Island". □

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Aruba Quality Apartments & Suites has been providing quality service in Aruba since 1995. On the premises are a total of 73 apartments (46 Studio, 22 loft apartments & 5 suites).

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The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure of recognizing Goodwill Ambassadors of Aruba. These honorees were honored with a certificate acknowledging their years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba. The honor certification is presented on behalf of the

## Aruba Tourism Authority honors loyal visitors at Cas Di Soño Vacation Rentals!

Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three honoring levels are as follows:  
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Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)  
Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

The honorees were: Goodwill Ambassadors of Aruba Mr. Scott & Mrs. Christina McGinn from Indiana, United States.

Ms. Kimberley Richardson representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and the property manager of Cas Di Soño Vacation Rentals bestowed the certificate to the honorees, presented them with memorable gifts, and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their best-loved vacation destination, as their home-away-from-home.

Top reasons for returning to Aruba provided by the honorees were:  
Aruba's beautiful beaches  
Aruba's warm and friendly people  
Aruba's perfect sunsets  
Aruba's restaurants  
"Aruba is our home away from home"

On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the honorees for their continued visits to the "One Happy Island". ☐



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**Fresh fruits make a tropical holiday's picture complete. Whether you see the mangoes hanging in the trees or the fresh fruit cocktail on the side table of your pool bed, the link is there: you are in the tropics. Aruba grows her own fruits and veggies and there are some pretty out-of-space local species you may never had heard of, but really healthy and delicious.**

**Mispel**

This is a fruit with a character (5-10 cm/2-4 inches). It does not ripe until it is picked or falls off the tree. Mispel is hard with a sandpaper like texture when immature, soft and juicy when ripe. It's technically a berry, but contains a skin similar to that of a kiwi. It's grainy and sweet, with a light, musky flavor. The sap or gum from the tree is also a source of 'chicle' the original ingredient used to make chewing gum. Rich in tannins, antioxidants shown to contain anti-inflammatory compounds, and vitamin C, essential for healthy immune function. Season: year-round.

**Kenepa**

Ovoid green fruit that grows in bunches on trees up to 30m high. The fruit is related to the lychee and have tight, thin but rigid skins. Inside the skin is the tart, tangy, or sweet pulp of the fruit covering a large seed. The pulp is usually cream or orange colored. Kenepa strengthens the immune system, and prevents the reproduction of bacteria and viruses in the body. This fruit is highly recommended to treat lung infections and

urinary tract infections. It also helps to cure insomnia and rejuvenates the nervous system. Season: the fruit typically ripen during the summer.

**Druif**

There is no chance you did not bump into one of the sea grape trees while spending your vacation on Aruba. The sea grape plant is often used in ocean-side landscaping in sandy soil right on the beach and it produces clusters of fruit that resemble grapes. Are sea grapes edible? Yes, they are. Animals enjoy sea grapes and humans can eat them as well, and they are used to make jam. They contain very low calories and sugar, enabling good bacterium to digest food and excrete waste quickly which is effective in preventing constipation. Season: Sep-Oct.

**Shimarucu**

Maybe Aruba's most popular wild fruit tree. You may have noticed cars at the side of the road and people picking those red berries. Well, that's Shimarucu. The local habit to stop for these delicious fruits goes from generation to generation. Its fruit's degree of sour depends on the amount of rain it gets. Red Shimarucus tend to taste better than orange. The fruit has super power: a true vitamin bomb. Adults only need to eat 3-4 of these berries to meet their daily recommended amount of Vitamin C. Season: Rainy months (Oct-Jan).

**Tamarind**

A delicious, sweet fruit that has a wide variety of uses and applications, both for medicinal and culinary purposes. It is a medium-sized bushy tree with evergreen leaves and fruit that develops in pods characterized by long, brown shells. Inside is a sticky, fleshy, juicy pulp, which is the Tamarind fruit. Both sweet and sour in taste, the fruit contains a significant level of vitamin C, as well as vitamin E, B vitamins, calcium, iron, phosphorous, potassium, manganese, and dietary fiber. There are also a number of organic compounds that make tamarind a powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory agent. Season: March.

When it comes to veggies the island certainly offers a home-grown selection. They taste delicious and have their specific talents to boost your immune system. Start the day with a 'batida' (smoothie) enriched with a local veggie touch or select your restaurant that offers local vegetable dishes to get the real pure taste of it.

**Comcomber chiquito**

This is a sort of local squash, but looks like a cucumber with prickly skin. The taste however is bitterer than the cucumber and the vegetable is smaller in size but bigger in width. Inside is a soft, fleshy pulp and seeds, just like the cucumber. Comcomber chiquito is grown in the island and used in salads and 'stoba' (stew) or on its own in vinegar. The veggie contains multiple B vitamins, including vitamin B1, vitamin

B5, and vitamin B7 (biotin). B vitamins are known to help ease feelings of anxiety and buffer some of the damaging effects of stress. Additionally this veggie is rich in two of the most basic elements needed for healthy digestion: water and fiber. Season: year-round.

**Yambo**

Family of Okra, also known as 'lady's fingers': a green flowering plant. Okra belongs to the same plant family as hibiscus and cotton. A classic favorite dish in Aruba is Sopi di yambo. It has long been favored as a food for the health-conscious. It contains potassium, vitamin B, vitamin C, folic acid, and calcium. It's low in calories and has a high dietary fiber content. Recently, a new benefit of including okra in your diet is being considered. Okra has been suggested to help manage blood sugar in cases of type 1, type 2, and gestational diabetes. Season: year-round.

**Bonch'i Cunucu**

A long, small bean, boiled for a side dish or snack. Long beans have a chewy, crunchy texture—more so

than snap beans—and a flavor reminiscent of the dry navy bean or asparagus. Besides stir-fry, soups and salads, the long bean is a good choice for stewing, braising (to remain chewy and firm), sautéing, shallow frying, and deep frying. With cooking, the long bean's bean flavor intensifies. Long beans are low in calories, about 45 calories per cup, and rich in vitamin A and also contain vitamin C and potassium. Season: year-round.

**Pampuna**

In the endless summer of Caribbean living we only have to concern ourselves with a wet season and a dry season. Still we do indulge heavily in the pleasures of pumpkin and enjoy Caribbean pumpkin recipes year round. A popular dish in Aruban restaurants is Sopa Di Pompuna, don't miss it. This dish is made of pumpkin soup, and parsley. Pumpkins are rich in flavonoid polyphenolic antioxidants such as xanthin, lutein and carotenes and also contain vitamins. Pumpkin seeds are a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins, minerals and proteins. Pumpkins are used to make desserts, breads and soups. □

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## Episode LXXXVIII – 88 Aruba in the eye of the Dutch

From the end of the sixteenth century the Dutch began exploring the Spanish new world territories and were first seen in 1585 around our islands by Caquetian scouts. Small companies at Amsterdam, Enkhuzen and Rotterdam organized illicit trade with their partners on the Iberian dominions across the Atlantic.

The role of Amsterdam's Sephardic merchants in the westward expansion of commerce and trade across the vast ocean, offered an historical turning point for Holland as a world power, by connecting the Dutch capital to the growing network of emerging merchants of the "Portuguese Nation," who were conducting trade from the Iberian Peninsula and its American colonies. Sephardic merchants played a significant role in sustaining trade with the main land America. For trade with Spanish colonies was interdicted to all foreigners.

1624 had been related



in some documents, that there are cattle and Christianized Indians on the islands of Curacao Bonaire and Aruba. Aruba is a low country, but has two small mountains, called Yamanta and Pan de Azucar as called by the Spanish, the last presents itself to the eye in the shape of a sugar-loaf, our today's "Hooiberg" Haystack. A pyramid shaped hill about five miles in circumference and an elevation of 165 m. The island is inhabited by families of Amerindian Christians, mestizos and some Spaniards". They sustained their

selves as farmer, fishermen. They hunted and herd horses, mules, donkeys, cattle, goats and sheep. Nothing is heard yet about landings on Aruba, though its few inhabitants some years afterwards saw ships sporting the flag of the West India Company sailing past.

Aruba's horsemen frightened the Dutch. In January 1627 a Dutch expedition commanded by Van Uytgeest was off St. Vincent, where they remained for some days. Next their course led them past Martinique, Santa Lucia, Dominica and

St. Kitts and finally reaching Tortuga. Along the coast they cruised to Maracaibo and on May 1627 they arrived off Aruba, observing on shore many natives on horseback who did not look friendly, and did not think it advisable to disembark there. They sailed on to Rio Hacha, Colombia. Van Uytgeest, therefore, must have been close inshore, and the sight of those horsemen on Aruba must have been so disquieting that his people, who were not easily daunted, preferred the safety of their ships.

Between 1628 and 1630, some Dutch squadrons are noted sailing past in the Caribbean Sea steering for Bonaire. As a result Aruba was not the first of the three Leeward Islands to be called at by the Dutch, this was to be Bonaire in 1623. Of course there have been more ships around the islands under other flags. But not everything that happened was recorded.

In 1633 Spain conquers the island of St. Martin, a

strategic point on the line connecting Brazil and New Netherland. They were in search of a suitable operational base in the struggle for supremacy in the New World. They are weighing the pros and cons of various islands. In this connection refer to the island of Aruba and its importance with regard to the route to Lake Maracaibo. But they don't possess sufficient information concerning the South Caribbean. Until Jan Jansz Otsen, who had fallen into Spanish hands and thus seen something of Curacao, offers his services to the Dutch squadrons. Now! The Dutch decided to conquer these three "islands of Curacao" in the year 1634.

To get to know a little more regarding Aruba's and its cultural origins we highly recommend Etnia Nativa's cultural encounter session. A mind opening portal to an entertaining island experience. Mail us at [etnianaativa03@gmail.com](mailto:etnianaativa03@gmail.com) our facilities and activities take place close to high rise hotels. □

## Aruba's most family-friendly beaches

**(Oranjestad)—One of the biggest concerns that parents have when travelling with their children is a guarantee of their safety and healthy enjoyment. Therefore, we thought it would be a great help to travelling parents to list off some of the most family-friendly beaches around the island.**

**Baby Beach in San Nicolas**  
Baby Beach is one Aruba's most popular and visited beaches, and for good reason: This sandy and quiet lagoon is a great place for parents to sit back and re-

lax while their children play in the shallow shores of the beach. Beside the relaxing atmosphere, there are also several services that may accommodate your stay, like a parking lot, sun tent rentals, chairs, bathrooms and a snack bar right at the far left of the beach.

### Mangel Halto in Pos Chiquito

Mangel Halto is situated in the back streets of the Pos Chiquito city. Though there are several stairs on the sides of the beach cliff leading you down, the best spot for fami-

lies to hang out is across the bridge, passed the mangrove trees near the entrance sign. Here, there are small and big palapas, perfect for big and small families to set up their belongings. In this area, the shore is also shallow, falling right around your knee before slowly getting deeper: perfect for kids to safely play.

### Eagle Beach/Palm Beach in the hotel area

Yet another highly popular beach site, Eagle Beach and Palm Beach is where most of our visitors go to tan, swim or play in the white sand.

Because they are near the low-rise and high-rise hotel areas, these beaches are the most accessible for visitors on foot. These beaches also offer many palapas free to use, but you can also rent chairs and tents. Much like Baby Beach, these sites are one of the best beaches for your children to play and build sand castles.

### Boca Catalina in Malmok

Boca Catalina is a small bay beach near the Malmok beach area further down the hotel areas. Though it may not be a very sandy beach, it is relatively quiet and tranquil.

This is a great place for family to lay down a big blanket and have a little picnic. This is also one of the best places to snorkel, as this area is filled with little fish and corals, even close to the shore.

### Palm Island

Ok, this one is technically not a beach, but a must-visit attraction for family fun. This small water park oasis is located further down the Mangel Halto Beach and is reachable by boat. This water park offers 6 hours of fun activities, food, drinks, and a chance to see pink flamingoes up close! □

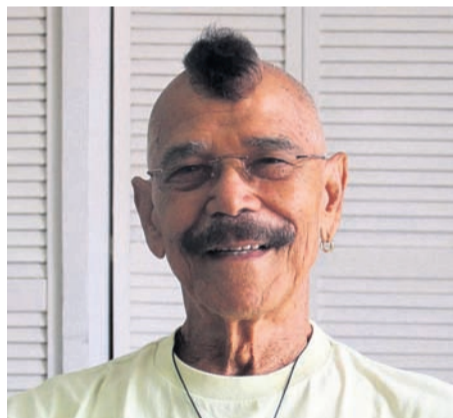
## A brief history of the California Light House



(Oranjestad)—At the furthest western point of the island, there lies the tallest structure on the island: The California Light House. Standing on top of a limestone cliff, this lighthouse oversees the entire island, offering one of few best views of the island and the surrounding sea. It is also one of the few monuments that hold a rich history.

The lighthouse was constructed in between 1914-1916, and its first keeper was a young trained lighthouse keeper from Curacao names Jacob Jacobs. Mr. Frederico Fingal was the last man to have occupied this position until 1962. Though his son, Mr. Romulo Fingal did not continue in his father's footsteps, he does have a special connection to the lighthouse. He sat down with our reporter and shared a bit of its history.

As Mr. Fingal explains, "In 1915, cargo donkeys were hired from Figaroa di Noord to help build the Lighthouse at Westpunt. The donkeys had to walk along the beach all the way to Westpunt carrying the cargo, poles, cement, and all these things. At that time, it was a difficult task until Aruba got its first truck. These things reflect how people could have accomplished this tremendous job with so little." Mr. Fingal said, "At that time, it wasn't a place for people to work.



It was very challenging because it was full of goats and donkeys, and it was very isolated. There were no hotels or roads to get there. There was only a donkey trail. Those were the only means of transportation."

Mr. Fingal continues, "In 1939, I was born in the lighthouse, and my father was the last lighthouse keeper until he retired in 1962. After that, they removed the power cables all the way to the top. According to the story, we couldn't have the light ourselves because they dismantled it, and after many years, I heard that it is in a train museum in San Nicolas, where we found this very special lens that, when the light shines through it, it reaches 30 kilometers out to sea." Mr. Fingal told our reporter.

The lighthouse has a long and very interesting history. The reason why the lighthouse was built, according

to Mr. Fingal, dates back to the day when the cargo ship S.S. California sank because of the lack of light. In 1913, Aruba made a request to Curacao to build a Lighthouse at Westpunt, and the governor of Curacao responded to Aruba to come back in 1915 with a well-detailed plan. "During the First World War from 1914 to 1918, they had to wait for the light to be transported to Aruba because it was manufactured in France. At that time, there was no electricity, and the light was very interesting because it rotated with a kerosene lamp that planes used; clean kerosene," Mr. Fingal said.

Mr. Fingal discovered something very interesting about the lighthouse after much research was documented in his book 'History of the Lighthouse at Westpunt.' He found many details: "I found out that the height of the lighthouse was due to the absence of electricity. There was also the presence of coral. There is a long steel cable from where the light is, and under the light, at the highest point, there is a hanging weight, a sort of pendulum that swings like that, with a weight that measures about 1 meter by 30 centimeters wide, which is a block of solid iron attached to a cable. When you release it upwards, it comes down, and the weight that comes down

pulls it up, gradually. And while it comes down, the same weight that is descending causes many small wheels to turn in the opposite direction. The Lighthouse rotates from 6 pm in the evening, when the sun sets, until 6 am in the morning. During the entire night, the light shines on the lantern, it goes down 24 meters, and the Lighthouse is 30 meters high. It is designed not to collapse," Mr. Fingal explains.

Mr. Fingal further explains that in one night, the lighthouse rotates 4,320 times and consumes one gallon of kerosene for the whole operation. "At that time, the kerosene was supplied from the Lago refinery. Every day it was brought down, and to start the light again, they had to lift the weight up, so our job as children was to crank it and raise the weight back up in the evening when the light stuck, they would take it down again, and the light stayed down. That's how it worked for a very long time," Mr. Fingal explains.

Thanks to the Monument Fund Aruba, which worked hard and is currently in charge of the Lighthouse, Mr. Fingal is very happy with its preservation, along with all the renovations that have taken place. He hopes that the story of the lighthouse will continue to live on for future generations. □

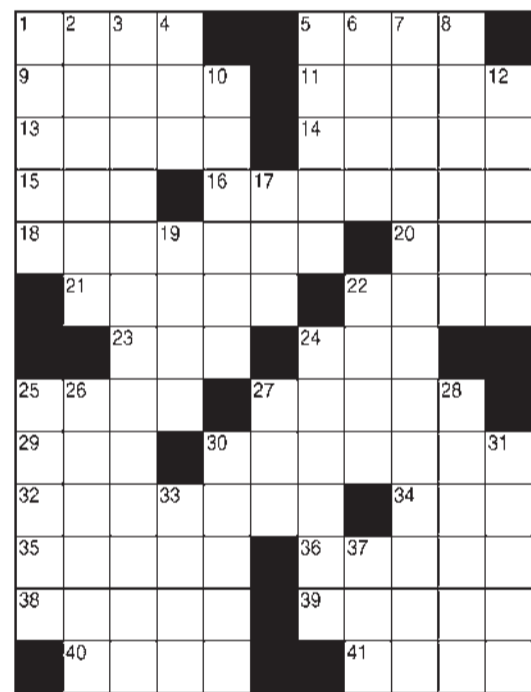
**CROSSWORD**

By **THOMAS JOSEPH**



Yesterday's answer

- ACROSS**
- 40 Pretentious
  - 1 Bar bills
  - 5 Makes suits
  - 9 Brass, for one
  - 11 City on the Po
  - 13 Genetic copy
  - 14 Give an address
  - 15 Young fox
  - 16 Relevant
  - 18 Liberate
  - 20 Place
  - 21 Goddess of the hunt
  - 22 Is the right size
  - 23 Greek consonants
  - 24 Hr. part
  - 25 Leo or Libra
  - 27 Avoid
  - 29 Band blaster
  - 30 Billing option
  - 32 Cornered
  - 34 Simile words
  - 35 Crime outing
  - 36 Short putt
  - 38 Justice Kagan
  - 39 Like a sports car
- DOWN**
- 1 Bulletin board items
  - 2 In cahoots
  - 3 Old aid for pen users
  - 4 Heir, often
  - 5 Emporium
  - 6 Mark's replacement
  - 7 Present surroundings
  - 8 Abstain
  - 10 Longs
  - 12 High homes
  - 17 Casserole bit
  - 19 Satyr's kin
  - 22 Rover's pal
  - 24 Some sacred music
  - 25 Pasta topper
  - 26 Gazelle's cousin
  - 27 Word on a bill
  - 28 Less complex
  - 30 Lineup
  - 31 Gls
  - 33 Pitched shelter
  - 37 Hoppy brew



12-22

AXYDLBAAXR  
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's. X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-22

**CRYPTOQUOTE**

K L O U H M R H Q G Z M O T Z G Y

R Z D M L U Z S M Z O P Z J , T D M

O T Z G Y R Z D Q L O U Y S H M L O

P Z J . — K L H G Y Q Y F U Z A Y U T

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: THE ONLY SPORT I'M NOT INTERESTED IN IS HORSE RACING. THAT'S BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW THE HORSES PERSONALLY. — NAT KING COLE

# The checkered history of the poinsettia's namesake and the flower's origins get new attention



Producer Rosalva Cuaxospa walks amid her potted poinsettias in a greenhouse in the San Luis Tlaxialtemalco district of Mexico City, Thursday, Dec. 14, 2023.

Associated Press

By **MORGAN LEE**  
Associated Press

**SANTA FE, N.M. (AP)** — Like Christmas trees, Santa and reindeer, the poinsettia has long been a ubiquitous symbol of the holiday season in the U.S. and across Europe.

But now, nearly 200 years after the plant with the bright crimson leaves was introduced in the U.S., attention is once again turning to the poinsettia's origins and the checkered history of its namesake, a slaveowner and lawmaker who played a part in the forced removal of Native Americans from their land. Some people would now rather call the plant by the name of its Indigenous origin in southern Mexico.

Some things to know:

**WHERE DID THE NAME POINSETTIA COME FROM?**

The name comes from the amateur botanist and statesman Joel Roberts Poinsett, who happened upon the plant in 1828 during his tenure as the first

U.S. minister to the newly independent Mexico.

Poinsett, who was interested in science as well as potential cash crops, sent clippings of the plant to his home in South Carolina and to a botanist in Philadelphia, who affixed the eponymous name to the plant in gratitude.

A life-size bronze statue of Poinsett still stands in his honor in downtown Greenville, South Carolina.

However, he was cast out of Mexico within a year of his discovery, having earned a local reputation for intrusive political maneuvering that extended to a network of secretive masonic lodges and schemes to contain British influence.

**IS THE 'POINSETTIA' NAME LOSING ITS LUSTER?**

As more people learn of its namesake's complicated history, the name "poinsettia" has become less attractive in the United States.

Unvarnished published ac-

counts reveal Poinsett as a disruptive advocate for business interests abroad, a slaveholder on a rice plantation in the U.S., and a secretary of war who helped oversee the forced removal of Native Americans, including the westward relocation of Cherokee populations to Oklahoma known as the "Trail of Tears."

In a new biography titled "Flowers, Guns and Money," historian Lindsay Schakenbach Regele describes the cosmopolitan Poinsett as a political and economic pragmatist who conspired with a Chilean independence leader and colluded with British bankers in Mexico. Though he was a slaveowner, he opposed secession, and he didn't live to see the Civil War.

Schakenbach Regele renders tough judgment on Poinsett's treatment of and regard for Indigenous peoples.

"Because Poinsett belonged to learned societies, contributed to botanists' collections, and purchased art from Europe, he could more readily justify the expulsion of Natives from their homes," she writes.

**A CHRISTMAS FLOWER OF MANY NAMES**

The cultivation of the plant dates back to the Aztec empire in Mexico 500 years ago.

Among Nahuatl-speaking communities of Mexico, the plant is known as the cuetlaxochitl (kwet-la-SHO-sheet), meaning "flower that withers." It's an apt description of the thin red leaves on wild varieties of the plant that grow to heights above 10 feet (3 meters). Year-end holiday markets in Latin America brim with the potted plant known in Spanish as the "flor de Nochebuena," or "flower of Christmas Eve," which is entwined with celebrations of the night before Christmas. □

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# Apple loses latest bid to avert patent dispute that has halted online U.S. sales of 2 watch models

**CUPERTINO, Calif. (AP)** — Apple on Thursday stopped online sales of two popular models of its internet-connected watch in the U.S. after losing its latest attempt to untangle a patent dispute that's blocking it from using some of the technology on the device. Both the Apple Watch Series 9 and Ultra 2 became unavailable to order online beginning at 3 p.m. ET, as the company followed through on its plan to suspend sales of them because of a legal battle

over an intellectual property claim filed by medical technology company Masimo. The International Trade Commission on rejected Apple's bid to get around a late October order blocking the company from using some of technology underlying the Blood Oxygen measurement feature on the Series 9 and Ultra 2 watches.

Watches equipped with the Blood Oxygen aren't affected by the ITC order. Wedbush Securities analyst Dan Ives estimates Apple's holiday-season sales will be reduced by \$300 million and \$400 million if the patent dispute results in the two watch models being pulled from the U.S. market during the final week of the year. □

## Two railroad crossings are temporarily closed in Texas. Will there be a significant impact on trade?

**By Valerie Gonzalez Associated Press McALLEN, Texas (AP)** — The federal government has closed railroad crossings in two Texas border towns, raising concerns about the potential impact on cross-border trade and American consumers. Customs and Border Protection announced Sunday that it would temporarily stop railroad operations in Eagle Pass and El Paso starting Monday. It did not say how long rail operations would be paused. The railroads and politicians have decried the move that closes two of the six available railroad systems between Mexico and the U.S. "This train doesn't just stop at Eagle Pass. This train doesn't just impact Texas," Rep. Tony Gonzalez,

a Republican congressman who represents the affected region, said Tuesday during a news conference. "This train impacts all of America, goods that are going all over America." CBP reported as many as 10,000 people entering the country illegally every day through the southwest border this month. Closing the railroad would free up customs officers to assist overwhelmed U.S. Border Patrol agents who need to take migrants into custody. Thousands of asylum-seekers who have crossed are sleeping outside along the border as they wait for federal agents to process them. Most are released with notices to appear in immigration courts, which are backlogged with more than 3 million cases. □

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Stymied by the decision, Apple decided to stop to stop selling the two watch models in the U.S. to comply with the ITC ruling that will now stand, unless the Biden administration overturns it by Christmas. Although the online sales suspension went into effect Thursday afternoon, the devices are scheduled to remain on store shelves until Sunday. The less sophisticated Apple Watch will remain available in the U.S. after Christmas Eve. Previously purchased Apple



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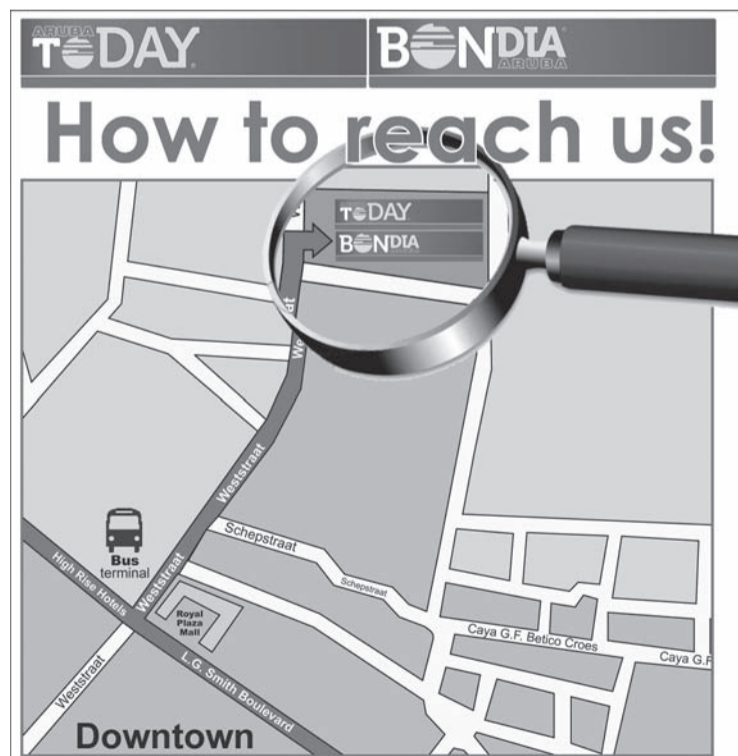
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# If this is goodbye, 'Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom' keeps its trident high

By **MARK KENNEDY**

**AP Entertainment Writer**

It's perhaps appropriate that the latest Aquaman movie is about a lost kingdom. In many ways, this mini-franchise is just that, a Jason Momoa kingdom that could just quietly sink below the cinematic waves. At least Momoa is going out swinging in "Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom," an overstuffed tale that goes from desert to ice, steals from other movies like a coked-up magpie and says goodbye at the near-operatic level of a mid-franchise Marvel flick. Much of it doesn't happen underwater at all.

"Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom" is likely the final installment of the King of Atlantis' storyline for a time. The new heads of DC Studios plan nearly a dozen film and TV comic book projects in the next decade and none have Aquaman front and center.

Holding it all together is Momoa, and it's hard to overstate his charisma, humor and presence. DC Studios



This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Jason Momoa in a scene from "Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom."

may regret deep-sixing this franchise if it doesn't find a home for an actor who actually looks like a real-life superhero. But, then again, they bungled it with Dwayne Johnson, too.

"Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom" is equivalent to "Thor: Love and Thunder" or "Fast X" — an attempt to raise the level of the last decent entry by keeping the same overall plot but just

throwing money at it more locations, more fights, more armies led by commanders in medieval-looking suits of armor riding underwater beasts.

In 2018 the last time Aquaman owned the movie theaters he battled his half-brother in the Ring of Fire, trekked to the Sahara to locate a clue about the Sacred Trident, wrecked most of Sicily, found the Hidden

Sea, reunited with his mom and united Atlantis, along the way slaughtering more sea creatures than the entire Red Lobster empire.

This time, Aquaman again under director James Wan must reconcile with his brother (Patrick Wilson, the Ken doll of the deep) and hunt down the villain from the first film, Yahya Abdul-Mateen II as Black Manta, who is using ancient

technology to destroy the globe, super mad at the murder of his dad.

The screenplay by returning writer David Leslie Johnson-McGoldrick throws everything at the sinking kitchen sink, including a cute sidekick (a genetically altered octopus) and a rare metallic ore named Orichalcum, described as "the greatest power in human history." It's basically a Kinko's copy of Eternium or Vibranium. Amber Heard is back as Aquaman's wife but this new movie is a brother-brother movie and so she's somewhat sidelined.

Johnson-McGoldrick unfortunately likes referencing other, better movies in the dialogue, like "Cast Away" and "Harry Potter," and layering in terrible puns like, "Put a hook in it." The sparks come from Momoa and Wilson needling each other like siblings do. Aquaman, at his heart, is a goofy, beer-drinking, motorcycle-loving bouncer while his brother is so uptight he'd bring his own coaster to the bar. □

**Associated Press**

# Comedian Jo Koy is picked to host the Golden Globes as award season kicks off

By **MARK KENNEDY**

**AP Entertainment Writer**

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Comedian and actor Jo Koy has been tapped to host the Golden Globes, picked by producers for his "infectious energy and relatable humor."

Koy last year saw his "Easter Sunday" become the first big studio movie with an all-Filipino ensemble. He has released five stand-up specials on Comedy Central and Netflix, including his most recent Netflix special, "Live From The Los Angeles Forum."

The Globes are recovering after scandal and several troubled years, including one without a broadcast. The show will take place on Jan. 7 and will mark Koy's first major award show host-

ing gig. "We are thrilled to have Jo host the 81st Annual Golden Globe Awards and bring his infectious energy and relatable humor to kick off Hollywood's

award season," said Helen Hoehne, Golden Globes president, in a statement Thursday. "We know Jo is bringing his A-game."

"I've stepped onto a lot of



Jo Koy arrives at the World Premiere of "Easter Sunday" on Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2022, at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles.

**Associated Press**

stages around the world in my career, but this one is going to be extra special. I'm so excited to be hosting the Golden Globes this year," said Koy in a statement. "This is that moment where I get to make my Filipino family proud."

Greta Gerwig's "Barbie" leads the Globes nominations with nine nods, including for best picture musical or comedy as well as acting nominations for Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling and three of its original songs. It is closely followed by its release date and meme companion Christopher Nolan's "Oppenheimer," which scored eight nominations, including for best picture drama and for actors Cillian Murphy, Robert Downey Jr.

and Emily Blunt.

The Globes' voting body has now grown to 300 members, following backlash after a 2021 report in the Los Angeles Times found there were zero Black members in the group that was then composed of only 87 foreign journalists.

The 81st Golden Globes will be the first major broadcast of awards season, with a new home on CBS.

The Globes had long been one of the highest-profile awards season broadcasts, second only to the Oscars. Before the pandemic, it was still pulling in around 19 million viewers. The show was touted as a boozy, A-list party whose hosts often took a more irreverent tone than their Academy counterparts. □

# MLB is widening the runner's lane to first, changing a rule that has caused World Series controversy

By RONALD BLUM  
AP Baseball Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Major League Baseball is widening the runner's lane approaching first base to include a portion of fair territory, changing a more than century-old rule that caused World Series controversy over interference calls.

MLB also is shortening the pitch clock with runners on base by two seconds to 18 and further reducing mound visits in an effort to speed games.

Another change adopted Thursday by the sport's 11-man competition committee requires a pitcher who warms up on the mound before a half inning to face at least one batter.

The new runner's lane overrides a rule that has existed since the National League mandated in 1882 that runners must be within the 3-foot box on the foul side of the base line during the final 45 feet between home and first. Violators were subject to being called out for interfering with fielders taking a throw. The rule was designed to prevent collisions; foul lines intersected the middle of bases until the bags were moved entirely into fair territory in 1887. "If you're sitting at home or you're even us in the game, it just doesn't make sense," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said of the old rule. The change widens the lane to include 18-to-24 inches of fair territory until the edge of the grass, though MLB said it will allow a grace period for compliance because of the need to modify artificial turf surfaces.

The old rule has long sparked frustration because right-handed hitters necessarily begin their sprint to first base in fair territory, and the first base bag is fully in fair ground, too. Umpires' interpretations of the rule have sparked disputes. The New York Mets' J.C. Martin was in fair territory when he was hit on the



Washington Nationals' Trea Turner knocks the glove away from Houston Astros' Yuli Gurriel during the seventh inning of Game 6 of the baseball World Series Tuesday, Oct. 29, 2019, in Houston.

left wrist by pitcher Pete Richert's throw following his sacrifice bunt in the 10th inning of World Series Game 4 in 1969. That allowed Rod Gaspar to score the winning run from second against Baltimore as plate umpire Shag Crawford and first base umpire Lou DiMuro failed to call interference.

"Since then I've always watched over the years everybody running down the lane," Richert said Thursday. "I'd say that 30% to 40% of them run inside and it's never called, and changing it now is not going to make any difference in those calls. It'll just justify the no-call. Every once in a while I'll be watching a game and I'll see it and I'll go, 'There they go. They missed another one.'"

The decision went the other way in the seventh inning of World Series Game 6 in 2019, when Washington's Trea Turner was called out for interference by plate umpire Sam Holbrook when he was hit on the back of the right leg by Houston reliever Brad Peacock's throw, a decision upheld in a video review.

"It's just going to make things easier for the ball-

players and the umpires," Holbrook said of the change. "Players can run straight to the bag, especially the right-handed hitters. It's been talked about for a while. I think they're trying to do the right thing." The out cost Washington a run when Anthony Rendon homered, and Martinez was ejected for arguing after the half inning, needing to be restrained by bench coach Chip Hale.

"I don't know how long that rule has been in place, probably a hundred years," Martinez said the following day. "These judgment calls are difficult. The umpires do the best they can on getting it right. I know that."

When Turner was called out for interference on a throw to first by Chicago Cubs catcher Willson Contreras following an errant pitch on a third strike on May 19, 2021, Martinez was ejected by umpire Chris Conroy. The manager picked up the first base bag and slammed it to the ground and then kicked it. After another similar call went against Washington on June 14, 2023, Martinez printed out a photo showing where the baserunner was and held it up during

his postgame news conference. A similar play occurred in Game 2 of the 1998 AL Championship Series, when a throw by Yankees first baseman Tino Martinez after Cleveland's Travis Fryman's 12th-inning bunt struck Fryman on the back and rolled on the infield dirt. Second baseman Chuck Knoblauch screamed at plate umpire Ted Hendry for an interference call and pointed toward first rather than chase the ball as Enrique Wilson scored the tiebreaking run from first. The changes were approved by the committee over objections from all five players who voted.

"Following last season's profound changes to the fundamental rules of the game, immediate additional changes are unnecessary and offer no meaningful benefits to fans, players or the competition on the field," the union said in a statement. "This season should be used to gather additional data and fully examine the health, safety, and injury impacts of reduced recovery time."

Speeding games remained a priority for the committee. Nine-inning games averaged 2 hours, 40 minutes

during the regular season in the first year of the pitch clock, down from 24 minutes from 2022 and the lowest since 1985. That speed-up carried over to the post-season, where nine-inning World Series games averaged 3:01, the fastest since 1996. However, the average increased over the course of the season from 2:37 in April to 2:44 in September. Mound visits are being cut to four from five, with a defensive team still getting an additional visit in the ninth inning if it has none left after the eighth. A catcher can signal for a mound visit, stopping the clock, without heading to the mound, and the clock will resume after a foul ball when the pitcher has the ball and is ready to resume the game, eliminating the requirement he also be on the mound. MLB hopes that eliminates pitchers walking onto the grass next to the mound. MLB said the requirement to have a reliever who warms up on the mound face at least one batter was instituted because a pitcher took the mound for an inning and then was replaced without throwing a pitch 24 times last season, plus twice more in the World Series.

MLB withdrew its proposal to have the plate umpire reset the pitch clock immediately after a batter uses a timeout. The committee tabled two proposals: one that would require pitchers to work from the stretch position with runners on base, eliminating hybrid windup/stretch deliveries that were used by 8% of pitchers last season; and another designed to prevent fielders from blocking runners at bases. Seattle chairman John Stanton heads the committee, which met by Zoom and includes St. Louis CEO Bill DeWitt Jr., San Francisco chairman Greg Johnson, Colorado CEO Dick Monfort, Toronto CEO Mark Shapiro and Boston chairman Tom Werner, along with umpire Bill Miller. □

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## Shohei Ohtani is the AP Male Athlete of the Year for the 2nd time in 3 years

By **GREG BEACHAM**  
AP Sports Writer

**ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP)** — Before Shohei Ohtani stepped into the bright lights of Hollywood and signed the most lucrative contract in professional sports history, baseball's two-way superstar put together yet another season of unparalleled brilliance from Tokyo to Anaheim.

What can this singular talent possibly do next? The Los Angeles Dodgers are eagerly paying \$700 million to see for themselves.

But what Ohtani already did in 2023 both for the Los Angeles Angels and for Japan's team in the World Baseball Classic is the reason he was selected as The Associated Press' Male Athlete of the Year for the second time in three years.

"Shohei is arguably the most talented player who's ever played this game," said Andrew Friedman, the Dodgers' president of baseball operations, after signing Ohtani to a 10-year contract last week.

Ohtani edged Inter Miami superstar Lionel Messi and tennis great Novak Djokovic for the AP honor in voting by a panel of sports media professionals.

Ohtani received 20 of 87 votes, while Messi and Djokovic got 16 apiece. Nikola Jokic, the Denver Nuggets' NBA Finals MVP, got 12 votes.

After winning his first AP Male Athlete of the Year award in 2021, Ohtani has joined an impressive list of two-time winners of the honor, which was first handed out in 1931.

Multiple-time winners include Don Budge, Byron Nelson, Carl Lewis, Joe Montana, Michael Jordan,



**Los Angeles Dodgers' Shohei Ohtani smiles during a baseball news conference at Dodger Stadium Thursday, Dec. 14, 2023, in Los Angeles.**

Associated Press

Michael Phelps and four-time honorees Tiger Woods and Lance Armstrong. Four-time winner LeBron James is another generational superstar who chose Los Angeles as a free agent, while two-time honoree Sandy Koufax remains one of the greatest players to wear Dodger Blue.

Ohtani has upended decades of conventional wisdom during his six years in the majors, even surpassing most achievements of Babe Ruth while playing in an infinitely more difficult era. Most new frontiers in sports are crossed incrementally and gradually, but Ohtani has toppled barriers that stood for a century with peerless skills, confidence and hard work. Ohtani unanimously won the AL MVP award in 2021, and he repeated the feat in 2023 after finishing second in 2022 to Yankees slugger Aaron Judge, last

year's AP Male Athlete of the Year.

This year began with Ohtani's dazzling MVP performance for Japan's championship team in the World Baseball Classic complete with a clinching strikeout of Angels teammate Mike Trout. He then turned in his third consecutive spectacular season both on the mound and at the plate in Anaheim despite an early end after he injured his pitching elbow in August.

Ohtani led the AL with 44 homers, 78 extra-base hits, 325 total bases and a 1.066 OPS as the Halos' designated hitter. He also held hitters to an AL-best .184 batting average while ranking second in the league with 11.39 strikeouts per nine innings and third with a 3.14 ERA at the time of his injury. "There's nobody like him, and there's nothing that you would say he can't

do," former Angels manager Phil Nevin said late in the season. "Anything is possible with Sho. I don't know who else you could say that about in baseball history."

Ohtani left Japan in late 2017 to pursue his dreams at his sport's highest level, and his exploits are followed in microscopic detail by his fans in his homeland. When he got his first chance to play for Japan in the World Baseball Classic last spring, Ohtani seized the moment with both hands.

Ohtani was outstanding in Japan's games in Tokyo and Miami, batting .435 with four doubles and a homer despite getting walked 10 times. He also pitched 9 2/3 innings, racking up 11 strikeouts with a 1.86 ERA.

The championship game ended in storybook fashion with Ohtani striking out Trout, the three-time AL

MVP and Ohtani's longtime Angels teammate, for the final out in Japan's victory over the U.S.

Ohtani then turned in another outstanding, unique season with the Angels before he hurt his elbow and eventually had a second surgery that will almost certainly prevent him from pitching in 2024, just as he missed nearly all of 2019 and 2020 as a pitcher. His injury history did nothing to suppress his free-agent value, partly because Ohtani can remain one of the majors' best hitters while he waits to see if his pitching elbow will heal again.

"One of the many things we've come to appreciate over the years about Shohei is watching him never take a pitch off, no matter the score of the game," Friedman said. "I've seen him in games where his team is up big or down big, grinding each pitch late in an at-bat hustling, doing everything he can to leg out an infield hit late in a game."

While Ohtani has redefined what's possible in modern baseball, he accomplished another unprecedented feat by signing his record-setting contract. The deep-pocketed Dodgers eagerly invested in the 29-year-old Ohtani's next decade while knowing his worldwide fame generates revenue no other baseball player can touch.

"I'm still in the pinch-me phase, to be honest," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said.

"Can't believe we're going to have the opportunity to have him wear a Dodger uniform. One of the most talented players ever to put on a baseball uniform is now a Dodger." □